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MEGILLATH MISSRAIM, OR THE SCROLL OF THE EGYPTIAN PURIM.

I.—INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

IN the course of my examination of the British Museum MS. Or. 67, my attention was arrested by an interesting historico-liturgical document, which, on a closer study of its contents, proved to be the long-lost Megillah of the Egyptian Purim. My principal guide in the identification of the document was the late Professor Graetz's reference to it in Volume IX of his *Geschichte der Juden*¹, and an examination of the sources to which he refers has helped to throw a good deal of fresh light on the subject. After narrating the events connected with Ahmed Shaitan's revolt against Sultan Soliman in 1524, and the deliverance of the Cairene Jews from the destruction which the rebel had designed for them, Professor Graetz states, in an elaborate note², that "there once existed a complete Megillah on these events," and he then proceeds to name the "secondary sources," which in default of the original Chronicle, he had consulted. These are, (1) the "anonymous" work, entitled מֵאוּרְעוֹת עוֹלָם³; (2) David Conforte's קִירַא הַדְּרוֹרִית; (3) Joseph

¹ Dritte verbesserte und vermehrte Ausgabe. Leipzig, 1891.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 22.

³ To this work Dr. Gaster drew my attention before I consulted Graetz, and as it is not identical with the booklet bearing the same title in Zedner's *Catalogue of the Hebrew Books in the British Museum* (see under "Abraham Moses," page 32), he kindly lent me his copy of the Hebrew text, together with a Spanish translation of a part printed in the

Ibn Verga's *Additamenta* to שבט יהודה; and (4) *The Chronicle of Joseph Sambarj*, published in Dr. Neubauer's *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles*. To these may be added Joseph Cohen's עמק הבבא (Wien, 1852), pp. 95-6, and the short reference to the subject in the same author's דברי הימים למלכי צרפת ובית אוטאמאן (Lemberg, 1859), part II, fol. 5a. As students will, no doubt, proceed to examine these secondary sources for themselves, I will here only remark that special mention is made of the Megillah by Joseph Sambarj¹, who finished his work in 1672, by David Conforte, whose קורא הדורות² was written between 1677-83³, and also in מאורעות עולם, fol. 19 b (under עותמנלים). It may also be useful to notice that Joseph Sambarj's account is on the whole in fuller agreement with the Megillah itself than Joseph Ibn Verga's *Additamenta*, which were written over a hundred years earlier⁴. This is accounted for by the fact that Joseph Sambarj was a native of Egypt⁵, and had himself taken part in the celebration of the Cairene Purim. Some further references to several of the secondary sources will be found in the notes added to the translation of the scroll, and a fuller and wider view of the historical events⁶ connected with

Hebrew character. The former appears to have been published at Smyrna in 1756, and the title-page of the latter shows that it appeared at Constantinople in 1767.

¹ Dr. Neubauer's *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles*, p. 145.

² Edit. Venice, 1746, fol. 33 a.

³ See Dr. Steinschneider's *Cat. Lib. Hebr. Bibl. Bodl.*, p. 858.

⁴ Completed in 1554.

⁵ See Neubauer, *op. cit.*, p. xvii: "The writer (i.e. J. Sambarj) is well acquainted with Egypt, his native country."

⁶ It is interesting to notice that the British Museum also possesses a printed contemporary Latin News-letter in which Ahmed's revolt, together with certain subsequent events of Soliman's reign, are described. This letter, which was written within a few months after Ahmed's death (dated June 29th, 1524), was addressed by Michaelis Bocignolus to Gerardus Planias, "Caesareae Maiestatis secretarium." The writer does not, however, appear to have possessed a very accurate knowledge of the events on which he wrote.

Ahmed's revolt may be gained by a perusal of the account given of it in Hammer-Purgstall's *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*¹.

There is at present no reason to doubt the statements of Joseph Sambari, David Conforte, and the author of *מאורעות עולם*, who looked upon the Megillah as the composition of contemporaries of the events narrated therein, and it is also only reasonable to suppose that the "savants of Egypt" (*חכמי מצרים*) of the former, and the "savants of the generation" (*חכמי הדור*) of the two latter, include David Ibn Abi Zimra², under whose Rabbinate Ahmed's revolt and hostility to the Jews broke out, and Samuel Sidillo, who conducted the special "prayers and supplications" in his own Synagogue (*ק"ק מכתערב*)³.

It is, at any rate, certain that a composition to which a definite place was for a long number of years assigned in the Egyptian liturgy, could only have been put forward under the direct sanction of the spiritual heads of the community, and it therefore follows that the Megillah must have borne the "imprimatur" of the two honoured names just mentioned, if it was not actually composed by them.

With regard to the style in which the scroll was written, it can be seen at a glance that it was purposely composed in close imitation of the Book of Esther; and although it is not quite free from non-Biblical words and constructions, it reads almost entirely like a Biblical narrative. The imperfect with the "waw-consecutive" is regularly employed in exact conformity with classical usage, and the document is also singularly free from involved constructions, which form one of the marks of the Rabbinic and the semi-Rabbinic Hebrew style.

¹ Zweite verbesserte Ausgabe. Pesth, 1834, vol. II, pp. 36-8.

² See Graetz, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-21.

³ See קצות הדורות, fol. 32 b. Comp. Neub., *op. cit.*, p. 145, where it is stated that the Synagogue is called ק"ק כריליי ער היום.

II.—THE TEXT.

[מגלת מצרים]¹

² ויהי בימי המלך שלמה הוא המלך שלמה המולך במלכות תוגרמה וארץ המזרח וארץ יון ובמחנות³ רבות: בימים ההם כשבת המלך שלמה על כסא מלכותו אשר בקוסטנדינא העיר הגדולה ויתבונן בכל מדינות מלכותו וישלח לכל מדינה ומדינה שר אחד לשפוט את עמה בצדק ובמשפט. אחר הדברים האלה גדל המלך שלמה איש אחד משריו ושמו השטן הידוע ושם את כסאו מעל כל השרים אשר אתו. וישלח אותו שר על ארץ מצרים ויצו אותו לאמר מצרים נתתיה לך ובה תשב ועל פיך ישק כל עמי רק הכסא אנדל ממך. רק חזק ואמץ מאד לשפוט בצדק ולהרחיק הבצע והמטבע תשים על שמי. ויבא השטן הידוע אל ארץ מצרים ויעל הפסגה וישב בה. ויתחיל לעשוק ולבצע ויעש הרע בעיני השם ויירב בימיו המס ויטוש השטן הידוע דבר המלך ויקבוץ הון רב ולא שבעה נפשו ועינו כי רחב נפש היה עד מאד. ותגבה נפשו מאד ויתן בלבו למרוד על המלך ויאסוף הון רב מכל אנשי מצרים ויתלקטו אליו אנשים רקים ופוחזים ויספרם וימצאם כשני אלפים איש. ויכרות ברית עמהם ושם להם הנחות ויחלק להם מעות כל אחד לפי ערכו. וישלח ידו תחילה בקצינים אשר היו בפסגה וגם מחיל המלך שלמה הרג כשלושים נפש. ויקח את כל החיל אשר באו אליו וילך וישם אהלו⁴ על שפת היאור. ויהי כאשר ראו חיל המלך שלמה הנשארים כי נהרגו הקצינים⁵ אשר היו בפסגה וכי השטן הידוע מרד במלך שלמה ויתקבצו כל החיל ויעלו אל הפסגה ויסגרו דלתותיה עליהם וישבו⁶ שמנה ימים בתוכה. ויהי כראות השטן הידוע כי חיל המלך שלמה לא שמעו בקולו וכי עלו לפסגה ומרדו בו ויתיעץ השטן עם יועציו ויאמר להם מה נעשה. ויאמרו אליו אם תקבל עצתינו ותעשינה אז נעשה אותך⁷ מלך. עתה לך והלחם עם חיל המלך שלמה ותקח הפסגה ותשב בה אז תקום הממלכה בידך. ויהי כשמוע השטן הידוע את הרבר הזה ותיטב בעיניו עצתם וילך וילקט מהעבדים אלף עם החיל אשר עלו עמו ונאספו אליהם

¹ There is no heading in the MS., but the title prefixed to this edition seems suitable.

² Or. 67, fol. 260 b.

³ The right reading is probably ומדינות.

⁴ MS. אהלו.

⁵ MS. בקצינים.

⁶ MS. וישב (?).

⁷ The MS. has לעשות for נעשה אותך, or נעשך.

כשני אלפים מעם הארץ ויעל הוא וכל עמו מאחורי הפסגה אל ראש ההר • ויתקן שם את כלי המשחית ויהיו נלחמים עמו שלשה ימים ולא יכלו לבא אל הפסגה • ויהי ביום הרביעי וישלך עליהם¹ את כלי המשחית ויבא על כותל אחד מן החומה ויפלהו לארץ • ותפול החומה על חמש מאות איש מחיל השטן הידוע ויוציאום מתחת החומה פגרים מתים • ויהי ביום ההוא בנפול החומה ויעלו חיל השטן הידוע אל הפסגה ויהרגו מחיל המלך שלמה תשעים נפש • והנשארים מחיל המלך שלמה ברחו ונמלטו ולא נתן השם בלב חיל השטן הידוע לדרוף אחריהם עוד • ביום ההוא בעת עלות השטן הידוע אל הפסגה וישימו אותו כל חילו מלך עליהם • ובעת שעשאוהו מלך עליהם ויזעקו ברחוב מצרים וכל עריה כי נעשה² השטן הידוע מלך • ויהי בהעשותו³ מלך וישם מס על כל האנשים אשר במצרים כי בקש לקחת את כל ממונם • ויבואו חיל השטן הידוע ויאמרו אליו ארונינו המלך אתה ידעת מה עשו עבדיך לך והמלכנוך עלינו מלך במצרים • ועתה אם מצאו עבדיך חן בעיניך ואם על המלך טוב תנתן דת להשמיד להרוג ולאבד את כל היהודים מנער ועד זקן טף ונשים ושללם לבז ולחנקם מהם כי הם אויבינו וצרינו: ⁴ ויאמר אליהם השטן הידוע היהודים נתונים לכם ועשו להם כטוב בעיניכם • ויהי כאשר שמעו היהודים הדבר הזה ויעשו אבל כבד מאד ויזעקו צעקה גדולה ומרה • ויקראו צום ויבכו ויעלו על ראשם עפר ויחגרו שקים מקטנם ועד גדולם ותאבל הארץ ואומלל כל יושבי בה • ויהיו בכל יום ויום צמים וצועקים עד שעלתה בכיתם השמימה • הרצים יצאו רחופים בדבר השטן הידוע והרת נתנה בחצר היהודים וכל היהודים נבוכו • ויהי כשמוע חיל השטן הידוע את דבר מלכם ויאספו מהם ומעם הארץ אלפים איש • ויבואו על העיר בטח ויבחו את כל אשר להם וישללו מהם שלל רב • והיה כל מי שימצא יהודי מבקש להרגו והרגו חמשה יהודים • והיהודים היו בורחים רצים ואצים למלט את נפשם כי אמרו כולנו מתים • ותהי צעקה גדולה במצרים וימת⁵ יהודי אחד מרוב הפחד • ותעל שועת בני ישראל אל השם השמימה ויזכור להם בריתו אשר כרת עם אברהם ועם יצחק ועם יעקב • א"י יחיד⁷ היה בפסגת הבירה והאל שלחו עזרי ומושיעי ותומכ⁸ ביד ימיני • והיה בהיות היהודים צועקים ויוגד הדבר לשר משרי השטן הידוע ויעמוד לפניו כי היה משנה לו • ויאמר לו המלך אם נא מצאתי חן בעיניך המלך ואם על המלך

¹ MS. עליהם.² MS. נעשה.³ MS. בהעשותו.⁴ Fol. 261 a.⁵ MS. וימת.⁶ MS. וימים.⁷ The MS. appears to have יחידו.⁸ The MS. appears to have והייתה.

טוב הניח ליהודים כי מה פשעם ומה חטאתם כי תמסרם ביד מבקשי רעתם •
ואם על המלך טוב יותן כספם וזהבם אל גנוי המלך אנוכי אערבנו מירי
תבקשנו • ויאמר השטן הידוע אל המשנה לך עשה כאשר תחפוץ וכל העם
לעשות בו כטוב בעיניך כי מצאת חן בעיני • ויבא המשנה ויכרו בחצר היהודים
כה אמר המלך אל יפשוט איש ידו ביהודים • ויאמר המשנה ליהודים שלום
לכם אל תיראו כי המלך צוה עליכם • ויהי כאשר שללו חיל השטן הידוע
את היהודים ויקחו את כל השלל ויניחו אותו בבית אחד השרים • אחר
הדברים האלה בקש השטן הידוע מהיהודים מאה וחמשים אלף פרחים זהב
גדולים ואמר גם כן אם לא תביאום במהרות אמתכם בחרב • וכשמוע
היהודים את הדבר הרע הזה ויתאבלו ולא יכלו לענות אותו כי נבהלו מפניו •
ויהי כאשר ראו בני ישראל כי יד השם נגעה בם ויזרקו עפר על ראשם
ויתקעו בשופר ויקראו עצרה וישבו איש מדרכו הרעה ויצעקו אל השם בקול
גדול ובכיה • ובהיותם בוכים ומתחננים לפני צורם ויעלו מהם אנשים ויפלו
לפני השטן הידוע ארצה ולא שמע אליהם • וישם השטן הידוע מס על
הארץ ועל אנשי מצרים ועל הסוחרים ואמר אליהם תביאו לי כסף זהב בלא
מספר • ויקח השטן הידוע מהיהודים אשר היו במצרים ממון רב והיו נתפשים
ביד אויביהם להכות אותם מכה רבה ועצומה • וכאשר תקפה עליהם הצרה
והגזרה ויחבאו מקצת מהיהודים ותנתן דת לכל אנשי מצרים כי כל יהודי
אשר יחבא יתלוהו על פתח ביתו • ובכל יום ויום הנוגשים פושטים יד
ביהודים ליסרם ולהכותם מכה רבה עצומה • ויבואו אנשים מחיל השטן
הידוע ויתפשו היהודים לקחת מהם כספם וזהבם וכל אשר להם • ויצעקו
אל השם בצר להם וממצוקותיהם וישעם • ויתחננו אל השם בקול גדול
ושמע השם נאקתם ולא היה בית במצרים אשר אין בו בכי והספד¹ ואנחה •
ובתשעה עשר לחדש אדר בקש השטן הידוע להאביד את כל היהודים אשר
במצרים מנער ועד זקן טף ונשים ושללם לבו •² ובשמונה עשר לחדש אדר
נקבצו היהודים לעמוד על נפשם בתפלה ובתחנונים ובצעקה גדולה ובצום
ובכי ושק ואפר יוצע לרבים • ותעל שועת בני ישראל אל השם וישמע את
נאקתם ויזכור להם בריתו • וירא אלקים את מעשיהם ואת תעניתם ואת שקם
ולא בזה ענותם וישלם ישעם פתאום ויושיעם מיד אויביהם ומבקשי רעתם •
בלילה ההוא עלתה שועתינו לפני האלקים ונכתבו תפילותינו בספר הזכרונות
ויהיו נקראים לפני המלך • ויאמר ראה ראיתי את עני³ עמי אשר במצרים
ואת צעקתם מפני נוגשיו כי ידעתי את מכאוביו • ביום ההוא נתיעצו השרים

¹ So the MS. ומספר would be better.² Fol. 261 b.³ MS. בני.

הנשארים מחיל המלך שלמה אשר היו מדברים עם¹ השטן הידוע בלב ולב • ויועדו לתפוש השטן הידוע ויקחו עמם מחיל המלך שלמה הנשארים שלשים איש • ויעלו הפסגה ולא מצאו השטן הידוע בפסגה כי היה בבית המרחץ • ויוגד להם לאמר הנה הוא במרחץ וילכו אליו כדי לתפשו וישמע ויברח מפניהם • (וירדפו חיל המלך שלמה אחרי השטן הידוע וישמע² ויברח מפניהם)³ ויעלו ולא מצאוהו • ויהי כראות שרי המלך שלמה כי השטן הידוע ברח ויעלו על הפסגה וישבו בה • וימהרו ויזעקו בכל רחובות מצרים שלום והשקט יהיה לכם ואל תפחדו • ויאמרו יחי אדונינו המלך שלמה לעולם ותהי שמחה גדולה עד מאד ומצרים צהלה ושמחה • ליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה וששון ויקר • ובתשעה עשר לחדש אדר נתועדו ונתקבצו חיל גדול וילבישום כלי זיין ויקחום⁴ עמם ויחלקום⁴ שרי המלך שלמה לשלשה חלקים וירדפו אחרי השטן הידוע וינוסו מחיל השטן הידוע אנשים ויחבאו בשדי הקנים • ויוגד לחיל המלך שלמה כי אנשים ברחו והם נחבאים בשדי⁵ הקנים וישליכו עליהם אש וישרפו אותם ואת שדי הקנים • ויבואו חיל המלך שלמה ויראו אותם שרופים באש • ויוגד לחיל השטן הידוע כי חיל המלך שלמה רודף אחריהם וימת⁶ לבם בקרבם ויעזבו את סוסיהם⁷ ואת חרבותיהם⁸ וילכו⁹ ויברחו מהם אנשים רבים וישליכו עצמם אל תוך היאור ויטבעו • ויבואו עליהם חיל המלך שלמה ויראו אותם מתים על שפת היאור • וינס¹⁰ השטן הידוע וכל חייליו אל עיר מערי מצרים ויכרתו להם ברית ויאכילום וישקום • וירדפו חיל המלך שלמה אחרי חיל השטן הידוע וישיגו אותם ויצאים מן העיר ויחרימו את העיר וישללו [אותה] וישרפו מקצתה¹¹ באש • והיהודים אשר היו בעיר שללו¹² אותם ולא הרגו מהם איש • וביום שמונה ועשרים לחדש אדר רדפו חיל המלך שלמה אחרי השטן הידוע וישיגו אותו ויתפשוהו ויחתכו את ראשו • ויביאו חיל המלך שלמה את ראש השטן הידוע תלויה על רומח ויתלו אותה על שער החוילה לעיני כל העם • והי בעת בא חיל המלך שלמה למצרים ועמם ראש השטן הידוע וישמחו אנשי מצרים שמחה גדולה • וכראות היהודים את ישועת השם ואת הניסים אשר נעשו להם כבימי¹³ המן האגני אשר בקש להשמיד להרוג ולאבד את כל

¹ MS. עים.² MS. וישמח.³ The words within () appear unnecessary.⁴ MS. ויקחו . . . ויחלקו.⁵ MS. משדי.⁶ MS. וימת.⁷ MS. סוסיהם.⁸ MS. חרבותיהם.⁹ Fol. 262 a.¹⁰ MS. וינס.¹¹ MS. מקצתם.¹² Probably so, but not certain.¹³ MS. בימי.

היהודים מנער ועד זקן טף ונשים ושללם לבו • כאשר יעץ העמלקי בן יעץ השטן הידוע לעשות והפר השם עצתם וקלקל מחשבותם ושב עמלם בראשם • על בן נקהלו היהודים והסכימו להתענות ביום שבעה ועשרים לחדש אדר ולעשות יום שמנה ועשרים משתה ושמחה ומשלוח מנות איש לרעהו¹ ומתנות לאביונים • על אשר עשה עמהם השם נסים ונפלאות והושיעם מיד מבקשי נפשותם • על בן קיימו וקבלו היהודים היושבים במצרים עליהם ועל זרעם ועל כל הנלויים עליהם להתענות ביום כ"ז לחדש אדר ולקרית המגילה הזאת בכ"ח בו ולעשות אותו יום משתה ושמחה • על בן קראו לימים האלה ימי נסים על שם שעשה עמהם נסים ונפלאות והושיעם מיד אויביהם • בן יאבדו כל אויבי השם ואויבי סגולתך כמו המן האגני והשטן הידוע שבקשו להשמיד להרוג ולאבד את כל היהודים מנער ועד זקן טף ונשים ושללם לבו • והשם ברחמיו הפר עצתם וקלקל מחשבותם ותלו אותם ואבדה רוחם ונשמתם ואוהביו כצאת השמש בנבורתו ותשקוט הארץ • ונזכור נפלאותיו וחסדיו אשר הוא עשה עמנו בכל יום ויום ובכל שעה ובכל זמן הושיענו ואנחנו עמך² אכיר ואכיר

על ישראל³

III.—TRANSLATION.

And it came to pass in the days of King Soliman⁴ (this is King Soliman who reigned in Turkey, and the Levant, and Greece, and in many [other] provinces⁵), that in those days, when King Soliman sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Constantinople, the great city, he considered all the provinces of his kingdom, and he sent to each province a chief to judge its people in righteousness and equity. After these things, King Soliman promoted one of his chiefs, whose name was Ahmed Shaitan⁶, and he placed his seat above all the chiefs

¹ MS. לרעהו.

² The ' in עמך is evidently intended to mark the vowel of the כ (עמך, on account of the pause), and not to indicate a plural form.

³ In the MS. a word that looks like גיש (probably some unknown abbreviation) stands here. In the translation I have assumed the word שלום "peace."

⁴ Sultan Soliman (or Sulaiman) I, surnamed the Magnificent, reigned from 1520 to 1566.

⁵ The text has: "and in many military camps."

⁶ The Hebrew has: "the well-known Satan" all through the Megillah. By the term יהודי, the Arabic name احمدر was probably meant to be

that were with him. And he sent him to be a ruler over the land of Egypt, and he commanded him, saying, Egypt have I given to thee, and in it shalt thou dwell, and according to thy word shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou. Only be thou strong and very courageous to judge in righteousness, and to discard unjust gain, and the coinage¹ shalt thou issue in my name. And Ahmed Shaitan came into the land of Egypt, and he went up to the citadel, and dwelt there. And he began to oppress, and to exact money, and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Holy One², and the taxes increased in his days, and Ahmed Shaitan forsook the command of the king, and gathered together much substance, and his spirit was not satisfied, neither was his eye satisfied, for he was a man of very great greed. And his soul was greatly lifted up, and he determined to rebel against the king; and he collected much substance from all the people of Egypt, and vain and light persons gathered round him, and he numbered them, and found them about two thousand men. And he made a covenant with them, and remitted them [their taxes], and he distributed money among them, to each man according to his value. And he first stretched out his hand against the wealthy men who were in the citadel, and he also killed about thirty persons of the force of King Soliman. And he took all the armed men who came to him, and he went and fixed his dwelling on the banks of the Nile. And it came to pass, when the remainder of the king's force saw that the wealthy men who had been in the citadel were killed, and that Ahmed Shaitan had rebelled against King Soliman, that the whole force assembled themselves, and went up into the citadel, and closed its gates upon them, and they stayed in it for eight days. And it came to pass, when Ahmed Shaitan saw that the force of King Soliman listened not to his voice, and that they had gone up into the citadel, and rebelled against him, that he consulted with his councillors, and said unto them, What should we do? And they said unto him, If thou wilt accept our counsel and act accordingly, then shall we make thee king. Now, go and fight against the force of King Soliman, and take the citadel, and dwell in it; then shall the kingdom be established in thy hand. And

vaguely represented. In Turkish history, Ahmed bears the name of "traitor."

¹ The two most important sovereign rights of the Sultan were the coinage and the *خطبة*, i.e. the mention of his name in the public prayers at the mosque.

² The divine name is generally avoided in the Megillah. In the translation, the term *השם* is rendered by "the Holy One," wherever it occurs.

it came to pass, when Ahmed Shaitan heard this saying, that their counsel was well-pleasing in his eyes, and he went and collected a thousand men from among the slaves, together with the force that had gone up with him; and there assembled themselves unto them about two thousand of the people of the land, and he and all his people went up from behind the citadel to the top of the hill. And he prepared there the instruments of destruction, and they continued to fight against him for three days, so that they¹ could not enter the citadel. And it came to pass on the fourth day that he hurled upon them the instruments of destruction, and he scaled one wall of the fortification, and brought it down to the ground. And it fell upon five hundred men of Ahmed Shaitan's force, and they drew them out from under the wall dead bodies. And it came to pass on that day, when the wall fell, that the force of Ahmed Shaitan went up into the citadel², and killed ninety men of the force of King Soliman. And the remainder of King Soliman's force fled and escaped, and the Holy One did not put it into the heart of Ahmed Shaitan to pursue them further. On that day, at the time when Ahmed Shaitan went up into the citadel, his whole force made him king over them. And at the time when they made him king over them, they proclaimed in the streets of Cairo³, and in all the neighbouring cities, that Ahmed Shaitan was made king. And it came to pass, when he had been made king, that he laid a tax upon all the inhabitants of Egypt, for he wanted to take away all their money. And Ahmed Shaitan's force came and said unto him, Thou knowest, O our lord the king, what thy servants have done unto thee, and that we have made thee king in Egypt. And now, if thy servants have found favour in thine eyes, and if it please the king, let a decree be given to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey, and to take vengeance of them, for they are our enemies and adversaries. And Ahmed Shaitan said unto them, The Jews are given unto you, and do unto them as is pleasing in your eyes⁴. And it came to pass when the Jews

¹ I.e. the force of Ahmed Shaitan.

² According to Hammer-Purgstall's (*op. cit.*) account, Ahmed entered the citadel by an old disused water-conduit, which had been pointed out to him. This statement agrees with the circumstantial details of Ahmed's entry into the castle as narrated in מאורעות עולם, fol. 18 b.

³ It is well known that *מצר* (מצרים) is also used to designate Cairo, and *מצרים* is, therefore, here translated sometimes by "Egypt," and sometimes by "Cairo," according to the requirements of the respective passages in which it occurs.

⁴ Both Joseph Sambary and David Conforte report that Ahmed

heard this thing, that they made a very grievous mourning, and they cried with a loud and bitter cry. And they proclaimed a fast, and they wept, and they put earth upon their heads, and they put on sackcloth, from the least amongst them even unto the greatest, and the land mourned, and all the inhabitants thereof languished. And they continued fasting and crying every day until their weeping rose up to heaven. The posts went out, being hastened by the commandment of Ahmed Shaitan, and the decree was given in the quarter of the Jews, and all the Jews were perplexed. And it came to pass, when the force of Ahmed Shaitan heard the commandment of their king, that there assembled themselves together of them and of the people of the land about two thousand men. And they came upon the city securely, and they plundered all that belonged to them, and they took much spoil. And it was so that every one who found a Jew sought to kill him, and they killed five¹ Jews. And the Jews fled, running in haste to save their lives, for they said, We be all dead men. And a great cry arose in Cairo, and one Jew died from great fear. And the outcry of the children of Israel rose up to the Holy One to heaven, and he remembered his covenant which he had made with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob.

There was *one*² man in the citadel of the city, and God sent him to be my helper and deliverer, and the supporter of my right hand. And it was so that when the Jews were crying, the matter was reported to one of Ahmed Shaitan's chiefs, and he stood up before him, for he was second to him [in rank]³. And he said unto him, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let the Jews alone, for what is their transgression, and what is their

Shaitan's anger against the Jews was caused by the part which Abraham de Castro, who was set over the Egyptian mint, took in making known to Sultan Soliman the designs of Ahmed with regard to the coinage. *גזל על היהודים אשר במצרים היה להם צער גדול*: fol. 19a: *במאורעות עולם*. *על אודות הנגר ה"ר אברהם קאספר*. Bocignolus writes: "*Erat Cayri quidam Judaeus vir satis amplae mercaturae, hic nescio quonam modo defectionem hanc non solum olfecerat, sed pene manifestis argumentis comprehenderat. Quamobrem Constantinopolim veniens . . . quid Axmatus molitur exponit.*"

¹ It is plain from the Megillah itself that plunder was the main object of the enemy, and that massacre was only resorted to as a means to that end.

² Note the play on the words *יהודי* and *יהודי* (Esther ii. 5). Joseph Ibn Verga states that the name of this councillor was *מאני*.

³ The word *משה*, which is here translated literally, is rendered by "Grand Vizir" in the passages which follow.

sin, that thou shouldst deliver them into the hand of those who seek to do them evil. And if it be pleasing to the king, let their silver and their gold be given into the treasuries of the king; I will be surety for it, at my hands thou mayest require it. And Ahmed Shaitan said to the Grand Vizir, Go and do as thou desirest, and do to the whole people as is good in thine eyes, for thou hast found favour in my sight. And the Grand Vizir came and proclaimed in the quarter of the Jews: Thus said the king, Let no man stretch out his hand against the Jews. And the Grand Vizir said to the Jews, Peace shall be upon you; fear not, for the king has given orders concerning you. And it came to pass when the force of Ahmed Shaitan had plundered the Jews, that they took all the spoil, and carried it into the house of one of the chiefs.

After these things, Ahmed Shaitan desired of the Jews a hundred and fifty thousand great gold pieces¹, and he also said, If ye bring them not quickly, I shall kill you with the sword. And when the Jews heard this evil thing, they mourned, and could not answer him, for they were terrified before him. And it came to pass, when the children of Israel saw that the hand of the Holy One had touched them, that they threw earth upon their heads and blew the trumpet, and they convoked an assembly, and every one returned from his evil way, and they cried unto the Holy One with a loud voice and with weeping. And whilst they were weeping and making supplication before the Almighty, some men from amongst them went up, and fell down to the ground before Ahmed Shaitan, but he listened not to them. And Ahmed Shaitan imposed a tax upon the land, and upon the people of Egypt, and upon the merchants, and he said unto them, Bring unto me silver and gold without number. And Ahmed Shaitan took from the Jews of Cairo much money, and they were being seized by the hand of their enemies to smite them very sorely. And when the tribulation and the evil decree pressed heavily upon them, some of the Jews hid themselves, and the command was given to all the people of Cairo that they should hang every Jew, who should hide himself, on the door of his house. And every day the task-masters stretched out their hands against the Jews to smite them

¹ This agrees with the accounts given by Joseph Sambari, and the author of *מאורעות עולם*. Joseph Ibn Verga has *כסף כסף*. The two former appear to have taken the words *פרחים* אֶף *נרלים* from the Megillah itself, only leaving out the word *ורב*, which indeed mars the construction of the different terms. Illustrations of the term *פרחים*, lit. "flowers" or "blossoms" will be found in e.g. H. A. Grueber's *Account of a Hoard of Coins found at Ephesus* (London, 1872). Compare the term "florin."

very sorely. And certain men of Ahmed Shaitan's force came, and seized the Jews, to take from them their silver and their gold and everything that belonged to them. And they cried to the Holy One in their trouble, and that he may save them out of their distresses. And they made supplication¹ before the Holy One with a loud voice, and the Holy One heard their groaning, and there was not a house in Cairo in which there was not weeping, and lamentation, and sobbing. And on the nineteenth day of the month Adar Ahmed Shaitan sought to destroy all the Jews that were in Cairo, both young and old, little children and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. And on the eighteenth day of the month Adar, the Jews assembled themselves to stand for their life in prayer and supplication, and great crying, and in fasting and weeping; and sackcloth and ashes were spread under many. And the cry of the children of Israel went up to the Holy One, and he heard their groaning, and he remembered his covenant with them. And God saw their works, and their fasting, and their sackcloth, and he did not despise their humiliation, and he sent them help suddenly, and he saved them from the hands of their enemies and of those who sought their hurt.

In that night our cry went up before God, and our prayers were written in the book of remembrances, and they were read before the king². And he said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters, for I know their sorrows. On that day was a council held by the chiefs who remained of King Soliman's force, and who had been addressing Ahmed Shaitan with a double heart. And they agreed to seize Ahmed Shaitan, and they took with them thirty men of those who remained of King Soliman's force. And they went up to the citadel, but they found not Ahmed Shaitan in the citadel, for he was in the bath. And it was told to them, saying, Behold, he is in the bath, and they went to him, in order to seize him; but he heard of it, and fled before them. (And King Soliman's force pursued Ahmed Shaitan, and he heard of it, and fled before them); and they went up, and found him not. And it came to pass, when Sultan Soliman's chiefs saw that Ahmed Shaitan had fled, that they went up into the citadel, and dwelt therein. And they hastened, and proclaimed in all the streets of Cairo: Peace and quietness be unto you, and be ye not afraid. And they said,

¹ Samuel Sidillo, the venerable chief of one of the Cairo Synagogues (vide *supra*), took a very prominent part in the arrangement and conduct of these services. See the accounts of Joseph Sambary, David Conforte, and מאורעות עולם.

² Note the not very happy allusion to Esther vi. 1.

May our lord, the King Soliman, live for ever; and there was very much joy, and Cairo rejoiced and was glad. The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy and honour. And on the nineteenth day of the month Adar, there was collected and assembled a great force, and they put armour on them, and they took them with them, and King Soliman's chiefs divided them into three parties, and they pursued Ahmed Shaitan; and certain men of Ahmed Shaitan's force fled, and hid themselves in the plantation of reeds. And it was reported to King Soliman's force, that certain men had fled, and that they were hidden in the plantation of reeds, and they threw fire upon them, and burnt them together with the plantation of reeds. And King Soliman's force came, and they saw them burnt in the fire. And it was told the force of Ahmed Shaitan that King Soliman's force was pursuing them, and their heart died within them, and they forsook their horses and their arms, and they went away; and many of their men fled, and threw themselves into the Nile and were drowned. And King Soliman's force came, and they saw them dead on the banks of the Nile. And Ahmed Shaitan and all his hosts fled to one of the cities of Egypt¹, and they made a covenant with them, and they gave them food and drink. And King Soliman's force pursued the force of Ahmed Shaitan, and they overtook them, as they were coming out of the city², and they destroyed the city, and they plundered [it], and burnt a part of it with fire. But the Jews who were in the city they plundered, but did not kill one of them. And on the twenty-eighth day of the month Adar, King Soliman's force pursued Ahmed Shaitan, and they overtook him, and seized him, and cut off his head. And King Soliman's force brought Ahmed Shaitan's head fixed upon a spear, and they hung it up on the gate of Zuwailah³ before the eyes of all the people. And it came to pass, when King Soliman's force entered Cairo, [carrying] with them the head of Ahmed Shaitan, that the people of Cairo rejoiced with a great rejoicing. And when the

¹ In Hammer-Purgstall's account (p. 38), the tribe of the Benu-Bakr is stated to have sheltered the rebel.

² In Hammer-Purgstall the city is named Mahalleh.

³ The Hebrew has *זויל*, but *زويلة* is the correct designation of the gate. See e.g. G. Zaidan, in his *كتاب تاريخ مصر الحديث* (Cairo, 1889), part ii, p. 72. In Niebuhr's *Reisebeschreibungen nach Arabien* (Kopenhagen, 1774), Band I, p. III, a *باب السويلي* (*suéli*) is mentioned as being "ein sehr schönes Thor, jetzt fast mitten in der Stadt." I must express my thanks to my colleague, Mr. A. G. Ellis, for directing my attention to several of the authorities to which I have referred.

Jews saw the salvation of the Holy One, and the wonders which were done to them, as in the days of Haman the Agagite, who had sought to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey—for as the Amalekite had counselled, thus counselled also Ahmed Shaitan to do; but the Holy One brought their counsel to nought, and caused their thoughts to perish, and their violent dealing came down upon their own pate—the Jews were assembled, and agreed to fast on the twenty-seventh day of the month Adar, and to make the twenty-eighth day a feast and rejoicing, and for sending portions one to another and gifts to the poor. Because the Holy One had done to them marvels and wonderful things, and had helped them out of the hands of those who had sought their life. The Jews, therefore, who dwell in Cairo ordained and took upon them, and upon their children, and upon all who join themselves to them, to fast on the twenty-seventh day¹ of the month Adar, and to read this scroll on the twenty-eighth day¹ of it, and to make it a day of feasting and rejoicing. They, therefore, called these days the Days of Marvels², because he had done to them marvels and wonderful things, and delivered them out of the hands of their enemies. Thus may all the enemies of the Holy One and the enemies of thy peculiar people perish like Haman the Agagite and Ahmed Shaitan, who had sought to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. But the Holy One, in his mercy, brought to nought their counsel and caused their thoughts to perish, and they hanged them, and their spirit and their breath of life perished; but those that love him are like the rising of the sun in his strength; and the land had rest. And let us remember his wonderful deeds and his acts of loving-kindness, which he is doing unto us every day, every hour; and at all times he has saved us. And we are thy people. Amen. [Peace] be upon Israel.

G. MARGOLIOUTH.

¹ Joseph Sambarj, David Conforte, and the author of מאורעות ציון, correctly give the twenty-eighth day of Adar as the date of the festival. In Joseph Ibn Verga's account, the fast of the twenty-seventh appears to have become confused with the feast on the following day. The chronological difficulty is clearly stated by Professor Graetz.

² The feast was known as the Caïrene Purim. In Graetz: "Kairo-anische Purim. Furim al-Missrajin."